

# Students in France get poor education, Bayview teacher says

"To me, this education system is so far ahead it's just out of sight. There is no comparison. Unequivocally — whatever the ability level of the students, our kids are better catered to in our system."

Those comments are not out of a comic book but come from Neil Graveson, a French teacher at Bayview Secondary School, who spent all of the 1977-78 school year teaching in France.

What he has to say in comparing the system of education there with what students receive in Ontario, will not only shock readers but should make them feel proud.

Mr. Graveson was on an exchange program which sent only eight teachers from Ontario to France which, in return, sent eight people over here for the year. Mr. Graveson taught English in Clamart and lived in

Malakoff, both suburbs of Paris on the south side. When comparing the two boards (York County and the school system in France) one must keep in mind that taxpayers here out-spend their French counterparts by 10 or 20-fold. Mr. Graveson said the differences between the two systems are phenomenal.

"From a teacher's point of view, the workload over there is much lighter than we have here. I taught Monday mornings, all day Tuesday, most of Friday and from 8:30 a.m. to 11:30 a.m. on Saturday — that was a normal week. In that region, there are no classes at all on Wednesday — a jour de conge."

He claims the first thing he learned is a teacher is a teacher and

don't spend money on education the way we do," he said. "I thought I'd gone back to the 19th century, something from another time, when I first saw the conditions there."

The year he was there, the school had no biology teacher. Students received no instruction in that area and some of the parents became so frustrated, they were often at the school asking the principal to get a new teacher. Supply teachers are unheard of — he had to apply right to the central administration to get one teacher.

One day, one of Mr. Graveson's pupils approached him for extra help. He was informed of the policy regarding such requests but decided to ask some of his fellow teachers what to do. They all told him to deny the request.

At one time, teachers and the family of the student needing help outside class, would set a price for their services offered.

However, it has become a general practice teachers don't hire themselves out after school because too many parents were demanding guaranteed results — something the teachers

couldn't provide them with.

**DIFFERENCES**  
Here are some of the other differences in the systems:

— no individual timetables available.

— at one time, if you fail one subject, you would fail the year; this is now being changed and failure can result only on the parent's request.

— field trips are non-existent — there's no money.

— there is no skipping of classes because of high degree of supervision.

— no entry into building until class time; must be off school property within 10 minutes of bell.

which results in under-achievement.

Mr. Graveson said he wouldn't go back to France to teach under any conditions, though he still recommends it to others as a one-shot experience.

"There is a strong division between the weak and the strong and it becomes a stigma causing social divisions in the classrooms."

"The superintendent there said education hasn't changed since the war — I honestly felt like asking him 'Which one?'"

Though he works a lot harder here, he said it's more satisfying and he gets more accomplished. He claims it's better for people who are interested in the youth — he likes to establish a rapport with his students.

The European students are very restricted and become very inattentive



French teacher at Bayview Secondary, Neil Graveson, said there's a world of difference between school systems in France and Ontario's Ministry of Education. He has taught in York County for eight years and definitely wouldn't teach permanently in Europe. (Photo by Steve Pearlstein)

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between the hours of 9 a.m. and 8 p.m. at the following location:

**TOWN OF RICHMOND HILL COUNCIL CHAMBERS**  
**10266 YONGE ST.**

Only persons who are entitled to vote at the Municipal Election and who expect to be unable to vote on polling day in their respective polling subdivisions may record their vote at the advance poll.

OCTOBER 25, 1978

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